

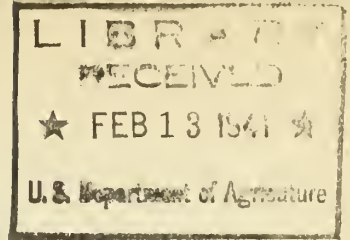
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IRWINVILLE FARMS



In the middle of the 19th century, when the Georgia families who had settled in the middle of the state began to migrate, they followed the western route. Only a few went into South Georgia, for that area was then considered a swampy, malaria infested place. It had a good deal of pine timber, but was seldom thought of as a farming country.

Consequently, South Georgia was slow to develop. Early in the 1800's it had been cut into large counties and large tracts of the land were granted to individuals. But at that time, aside from cutting out some of the pine, little was done to develop the country. A handful of towns were built, but they remained small. One of the earliest of the towns to be settled was Irwinville, county seat of Irwin County.

At the time of the Civil War, most of the land around Irwinville was owned by R. W. Clements, a cotton planter. About 1890 he died, and the plantation—which included more than 10,000 acres of farm land, pine woods, and swamp—together with most of the village lots and buildings, was turned over to his son, J. B. Clements. Irwinville continued to be a one-man town. J. B. Clements was the first man in Irwin County to receive a college degree; he also was Worshipful Master of the local Masonic Lodge, Judge of the County Court, and acknowledged leader of the community.

In 1908 the county seat was moved to another nearby town, Oscilla, which was served by a railroad as well as a main highway. This left Irwinville and J. B. Clements stranded. Fitzgerald, Oscilla, and the other towns that were springing up nearby were following the quickening pace of the rest of the country—new means of transportation, new ways of farming.

Irwinville had lost its court house. It still had its land, but J. B. Clements was not much of a farmer. He had spent much of his time and money in a desperate effort to hang on to the county seat; he was, and always had been, head over heels in politics. He spent the rest of his life getting elected to and serving in the General Assembly of the State of Georgia. The land was either left idle, or farmed by a few croppers the best way they could. In 1929 Clements went bankrupt.

When the estate was settled, an insurance company obtained 3,000 acres of the farm land, and three local business men formed a corporation to buy up the rest. The town at this time consisted of one empty court house; one abandoned jail; a few old houses; a small cement block building formerly occupied by a bank, now bankrupt; an old post office; a couple of combination gas stations and groceries; two churches; a two story brick schoolhouse; the ancient Clements Mansion; a small turpentine mill; about twenty Negro shacks; and an old hotel. The corporation took over the management of all the farm land, built about 25 sharecropper



shacks, and filled most of them with tenant families, which raised cotton and tobacco. A couple of village families put in their time running the gas stations; a few more owned little farms on the outskirts; a few owned skinny, poor-bred cattle that grazed on the open range.

The world outside, however, had changed a good deal. Back in 1908, when Irwinville lost the county seat, South Georgia was fast becoming settled, and in the next few years it experienced a rising tide of prosperity. Then, after the War and the Depression, South Georgia, along with the rest of the nation--particularly the nation's farmers--started the long slide downwards. Low farm prices, loss of foreign markets, erosion, drought, floods, collapse of credit, ill-health, mechanization, the one-crop system, the boll weevil, the corn borer, tenancy, and other calamities closed in on America's farmers. In the Spring of 1935, more than a million and a half farm families made less than \$500 a year--including all food they grew for home use. A large part of the world had settled back almost to Irwinville's level.

Not everyone had fallen behind, it is true. Those who were still able to get credit, and who had good land, machinery and the advantages of education, continued to make a fair and sometimes excellent living. It was this group that had taken over the job of supplying the nation's agricultural needs. By this time more than 90 per cent of the country's farm products were being marketed by about 50 per cent of the nation's farmers.

The other half of the farmers, however, needed help. The causes of their distress had been forming for twenty to fifty years--many of them were inherent in the ways in which they and their fathers had always lived--and they were not something that could be remedied individually or in a day. The bottom half of the nation's farm families was handicapped by lack of money, tools, land and education.

Most of these families had always depended upon their landlord for the plow, mule, seed and fertilizer they needed to make a living. At the depth of the depression, their landlords were no longer able to furnish these essentials. One of them, for instance, had this typical story to tell:

One day he met a former landlord of his in town. "You've been working on CWA haven't you?" said the landlord. "Have you saved any of the money?" The farmer said that no, he guessed he hadn't. "Well, I had hoped you had," the landlord said, "I'd like to give you a farm but I can't furnish you myself."

A few of these farmers had owned at least part of the necessary tools and workstock at one time or another, but the long string of circumstances--one-crop farming, low farm prices, constantly shifting residence--had wiped them out, financially. They needed help, and more important still, they needed a change in their way of living. Sharecropping, even with good land, good tools, and credit, had not brought them very much in the old days. In the depression world, it would bring them even less.



These farm families were scattered all over the country. Irwinville in a general way, lacked what all the distressed areas lacked. It did have, however, many of the essentials upon which a sound farming system could be built.

A report, drawn up before the Government's effort was begun, stated that there were approximately 2,000 acres of cleared level and gently rolling land in and about the town. The uncleared area suitable for cultivation was about 1,000 acres. The remainder was swamp, flatwoods, sandhills, and land too steep for cultivation. In general, the cleared land was rated as good and most of the fields were in a good state of cultivation and of average fertility. The greatest problem was the fact that about half of the cleared land needed terracing to check further erosion.

There was a grammar school in town; it was greatly overcrowded. The nearest high school was four miles away at Mystic.

There were 25 farm houses around the town. Most of these had been built or extensively repaired when the land passed into new hands after the Clements bankruptcy. They were frame, four or five room buildings, of a typical sharecropper cabin pattern, and nearly all of them were badly in need of repair. The weakness of the sharecropping system, with its constantly shifting tenants, was demonstrated by the fact that neither landlord nor tenants had maintained the value of investment in land and buildings.

For cotton markets there were Oscilla, nine miles away, population 2,500; Tifton, 17 miles, population 5,000; Fitzgerald, 9 miles, population 5,000. Tifton was a loading truck growing center and was served by three main railroads. It was also a large tobacco market and the center of plant-growing farms.

The census showed that Irwin County was, from a farming viewpoint, above the state average in value of farms and acreage of farm land in cultivation.\*

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\*Following are some points taken from the 1935 Census:

20 percent of farm operators in Irwin are Negroes; 30 percent in Georgia are Negroes.

82 percent of Irwin County's land is in farms; 67 percent of Georgia is in farms.

123 acres is average size of farm in Irwin County.

86 acres is average size of farm in Georgia.

4 times as many tenants as owners in Irwin.

2.2 times as many tenants as owners in Georgia.

Average value of land and buildings per farm \$2300 in Irwin--a drop from \$3200 in 1930.

Average value of land and buildings per farm \$1700 in Georgia--a drop from \$2600 in 1930.

Georgia has 159 counties; Irwin has 1/154 of the state's farms.

State has 250,544 farms; Irwin County has 1,622 farms.

Only nine Georgia counties raise more tobacco;

About one-third of the Georgia counties raise more cotton.

About 6 persons per farm for both Irwin County and the State

Irwin has 2.4 cows over 2 years old per farm.

Georgia has 2.2 cows over 2 years old per farm.







In brief the people of Irwinville, Irwin County and other parts of the nation had some of the means of self-support, but lacked tools, training, credit; most important of all they lacked a way of getting them. In 1933, the Federal Government undertook to help. By 1934, a tiny part of the Government's effort centered itself on Irwinville.

## PART II

All through 1934 the Georgia Rehabilitation Corporation, with the help of Federal funds, had been helping the worst hit of the farmers to get back on their feet. Its practice was to take a tenant or share-cropper off the relief rolls and loan him a few hundred dollars--just enough to make a crop. In this, it was simply taking over the work that the landlords and banks could no longer carry on. It also tried to give him whatever guidance he needed in farm management.

One of the Rehabilitation Corporation's greatest problems was to find good land for borrowing families to work. When their local agents first looked at Irwinville, it was with this single purpose in mind; here was a good-sized tract of land, that might very well support a group of the agency's clients.

In November of 1934, the Rehabilitation Corporation selected W. P. Bryan and sent him to Irwinville to see what could be done. Bryan was a capable farmer from nearby Tift County. He had been chosen a Master Farmer and was the "dirt farmer" member of the Georgia Rural Rehabilitation Corporation board of directors. Under his direction the Georgia Rehabilitation Corporation bought the farm land and the sharecropper shacks of J. B. Clements' successors. It took over what mules and plows and wagons the Tri-Farm Corporation had been using, and bought most of the village lots and buildings.

Bryan's first job was to get the land under option. Because so much of it was in one tract this was accomplished fairly rapidly. Then the new families began to arrive, sent by local relief agencies or directed by the rumor that the Government was renting some farms. Many of them were broke; Bryan had to lend some of them money from his own pocket, so they could eat and keep alive.

These families had all been on relief, and the brief facts of their past had already been officially recorded by the case workers; their ages, where they had lived, and in a very brief way, how they had lived. The case workers had added a few paragraphs of their own about the families' traits, characteristics, and habits as observed in home visits. With these case histories at hand, and after seeing and talking with the families Bryan selected as many families as the tract would accommodate.

In June, 1935, the newly created Resettlement Administration took over the work of the Georgia Rehabilitation Corporation and most of the similar corporations throughout the country. The major work of the state corporations had been to extend production credit to needy farmers.



Resettlement, too, faced the huge problem of supplying credit and good land to the small farmers. It continued to devote the major portion of its time and money to that problem. But Resettlement proposed to do more at Irwinville.

The Resettlement Administration, saw in Irwinville, a chance to go a step farther. Here the physical shell of a community was already in existence. Since the Government owned all the land, the farmers could be given a chance to plan ahead for two, three, ten years. At Irwinville, in other words, farmers would have a chance to use all of the tools, physical, and social that they could devise.

The rehabilitation corporation had started a similar community development in several other localities, but they had been limited by the short length of time from carrying the experiments very far.

There were several plans for developing Irwinville. One was to bunch all of the farmhouses inside the village proper. This would cut the cost of wells and other facilities to a minimum, make it easier for the children to attend school, and make it easier to establish community feeling and relationships. It might even be possible to work out some system whereby the farm land would be worked as one unit, with vast savings in the cost of fencing and barns and tools. This plan, however, was discarded.

Instead, the more conventional plan of individual farms, scattered around the town was used. Every farm a separate unit. The farms ranged from 50 to 100 acres. Both the size of the family and the type of farming determined the size of the farm. The families who went in heavily for truck farming did not need a large farm.

Monthly reports from the project showed its development during succeeding months.

In October, 1935, the County superintendent of schools reported that, due to the increased number of students, another teacher had been added, but the school term had been cut from 6 to 5 months.

In November, about 13 families left the project. Four of these families were "discontinued." The others left of their own accord.

In December, 1935, the Construction Division of the Resettlement Administration took over the construction work.

In January, 1936, the families who had left in the fall were replaced.

Not many families were added to the total accommodated, because there were no houses, as yet, to put them in.

When fall of 1936 came there still was no great change in the appearance of Irwinville. But there was a substantial change in the way the families provided for themselves and were farming.



Supervision had always played a part in the lives of the families, but now it had moved to the foreground. The Government had hired skilled technicians to help the Irwinville farmers. These people--the man a farm manager, and the woman, a home economist--were local people, of a very practical sort.

They helped the families make out farm plans. In these plans, the families provided not only for the cover crops and permanent pastures that would save the strength of their soil, but also for a variety of cash crops, and production of most of their own food supply. The home economist worked with the farm wives, teaching them to can fruit and vegetables for winter use, and plan balanced diets for their family in all seasons of the year.

This type of planning was new to most of them, but even stranger was the system of cost accounting the farm manager urged them to set up. Both farmer and farm wife were urged to fill out record books, putting down item by item the goods they produced and the money they spent.

In November of 1936, a registered nurse was hired by the Government. The nurse couldn't take the place of a doctor; but she could treat minor ailments and could offer complete preventive care, which checked many of the diseases that weakened the families.

The Spring of 1937 found 62 families working the project land. The Government loaned them funds for operating expenses. These Spring loans were a carry over from the old tenant and sharecropper system, under which each year, the plantation owner or furnish merchant advanced the families enough supplies to enable them to plant their crop and keep going until Fall. But there was a difference. Not only did the Government charge lower interest rates, but the farm plans the families followed placed them each year in a better position to finance their own work. This showed up clearly when the loans were made.

The loans, for instance, in the Spring of 1937, averaged about \$340. The largest part of this--41 percent--went for farm operating items, such as seed and fertilizer. The next largest amount was 22 percent for livestock; then 18 percent for machinery; 16 percent for subsistence; and 2 percent for household furnishings.

A glance at these items told a great deal. The diversified farm program for instance, showed up in the livestock item. The Irwinville farmers were buying beef cattle to supplement their crop income. The subsistence item indicated that already the families were able to supply more of their own needs. Under the old system these families usually needed an advance for food and clothing about as large as their allowance for farm operations.

The first week in May, 1937, was set aside as National Health Week and Irwinville had a full-day celebration that started out with a baby contest in the morning, followed by a parade and a picnic lunch at noon. In the afternoon the community baseball team won a victory over a neighboring town, playing in suits made by the project women.





In the same month, three project children were graduated from the high school at the nearby town of Mystic.

In June, 1937, the canning program reached a high point.

With the project's two pressure cookers stowed in her car the home supervisor drove from house to house helping the farm wives fill their jars. Snap beans, lima beans, black-eyed peas, squash, beets and beet pickles, cucumber pickles and chow chow, berries, jam and jelly and peaches were canned for use throughout the winter. A small co-op cannery had been erected near the community center and it was also put into operation to supplement the home canning.

During the summer of 1937, social activities began to expand. A Better Homes and Gardens club met twice a week. There were Wednesday night dances in the community center. On Thursday night there was group singing. With the girls out of school, the home supervisor took several of them over to the WPA center in Fitzgerald where there were classes in the making of trays, brooms, mats and other household equipment.

During the summer months the construction program went ahead full blast. Most of the houses already were completed, so the work was centered on the erection of poultry houses, storage houses, and painting, wiring and plumbing.

In the past the families couldn't raise many chickens because they had no place to keep them. They had no place to store their surplus food, and they never had any paint, wiring or plumbing.

Twenty-five cars of watermelons were shipped. Approximately 50 barns of tobacco cured. 3200 cans of fruit and vegetables were canned in the canning plant and approximately 1800 quart jars were filled at home.

In December 1937, the project families made down payments on 30 sets of bedroom furniture and 25 living room sets.

This furniture was designed by the Government and built by private manufacturers. Of simple, sturdy construction, it met their needs, added beauty to their homes, and still was within a price range they could afford.

At the end of 1937, there were 30 families in the community of the 43 that had made a crop in 1935. An inventory was made of the 30 families' possessions.

They had averaged \$77 worth of property apiece when they came to the project. Now they averaged \$415 worth of livestock, \$89 of farm machinery, \$141 feed and seed, \$181 furniture, \$139 food. Their average liabilities were \$189. Their average net worth was \$778 or a total increase in net worth of \$701 per family. With one exception, they had come from the relief rolls of the surrounding counties, Tift, Worth, Lenier, Ben Hill, Turner, Berrien, Cook, Cobb, Lowndes and Irwin.





These 30 families when they started farm operations in 1935, consisted of 30 married couples, four adult females, 47 girls, and 47 boys. Since then 11 children had been born, six boys and five girls. Of the older boys and girls that moved here with their parents, three boys and two girls had married. All three of the boys were now project farmers and making their own way. Due to the higher standard of living and better medical attention, there had been no deaths in the families.

The total livestock all the residents had to begin with was: 2 mules, 15 head of cattle, six hogs, 122 chickens. Now they had: 38 mules, 116 head of cattle, 483 hogs, 772 chickens.

The 20 clients that were still in debt to the FSA on January 1, 1938, owed \$4,329, divided as follows: 1936 debt, \$1,942; 1937 debt, \$2,386.

The families now operated eight two-horse farms and 22 one-horse farms. The operating loans required each spring had decreased each year, except where a client became a two-horse farmer and had to buy another mule, and in a few instances where a mule died and had to be replaced.

The Irwinville Farms Health Association began its activities on January 1, 1938. The annual dues were \$30 per family. Out of this sum, a physician from one of the nearby towns agreed to provide for the project's medical needs. Seventy-six of the families joined immediately. The doctor holds a clinic several afternoons of each week and furnishes hospitalization, surgical care, X-rays, obstetrical care and all ordinary drugs. He had certain hours each afternoon when he was available and at other times there was a charge of \$1 for home calls or \$2 after 7 P. M. There was also an extra charge for confinement cases.

Events of community life and growth followed one another in a normal way. Early in January one of the community farmers and his wife died of pneumonia.

Before the end of the month 21 new families moved onto the project and only two or three additional families were needed to fill the 82 completed homes.

All of the project families planted gardens and the men organized a mule insurance company. Each client that wished to join paid \$1 per mule into the fund. If his mule died he was to get its value in cash up to \$100. This was an invaluable safeguard against getting caught without a mule in the middle of a cropping season.

In May, 1938, the second May Day Celebration was held.

The local branch of the American Legion presented a flag to the school and approximately 500 children and parents attended the ceremonies. During this month, a group of Georgia teachers visited the project school and commented favorably upon its equipment. There was, they found, not



only a full supply of tables, chairs, maps, globes, books, but also a workshop for the boys and a home economics room for the girls. They found there what seemed to them a good basis for a healthy mental and physical growth.

The May 1938, report of the nurse's activities is a fair sample of every other month, and it is a good example of the load she was carrying--152 home visits, bedside care, obstetrical assistance, prenatal, post natal, communicable disease control, advice and health education, follow-up on children showing remedial defects; also eight morbidity clinics, three typhoid clinics; assisted in 20 physician cases, school activities including eight surgical dressings, classes on home nursing for 7th grade girls; monthly reports to State Health Department; contact with State Health Department for spot map on hookworm survey; meeting with directors on medical plan; three X-rays; pea removed from lung of 11 month old child, which was taken to Atlanta hospital for further treatments; demonstration and lecture in club meetings on home nursing; 165 doses of typhoid vaccine given; three toxoid (diphtheria) injections; two noses packed to stop hemorrhage.

The canning plant opened May 10, operating three days a week. This plant served only to aid the community families in accumulating a store of canned goods. It was not used for commercial production since it was only a little, one-room affair. In May, more than 1300 cans of beans were put up. At first a toll of one cent per can on ten percent of the canned products was charged to defray expenses; but later two boys and three girls were certified by NYA, as well as one man from WPA, to help with the canning and the charges were no longer necessary.

During May dry weather enabled most of the families who bought pressure cookers to keep up canning at home--1500 quarts total. At community club meetings that month the home economist gave demonstrations with the pressure cooker; the nurse demonstrated serving various diets to sick people; each committee chairman gave reports and suggestions pertaining to the work of her committee. The new warehouse was completed and the contract let for the construction of a retail store building.

The end of the crop planting season showed the following crops in the ground; 91 acres of tobacco; 600 acres of cotton; 450 acres of peanuts; 180 acres of melons for market; 40 acres of snap beans for canning; and 2200 acres of corn, peanuts, beans and other crops to feed to livestock.

The University of Georgia announced in June, 1938, that it would use Irwinville school as a center for teacher training and would send a group of cadet teachers there to help with the school program. The State Department of Education furnished a starting library of 900 books.

During the same month the cooperative cotton gin was completed. Typical of its past was the fact that Irwinville had never had a cotton gin. This new one was to be run by the community cooperative. It was the last word in gins. Its new metal sides gave the town proper--that is the crossroads--the first real sign of modernity it had had in thirty years. The gin was the first of the new community structures to be built.



(The warehouses and temporary stores were remodeled structures.)

At the end of the fiscal year 1937-38 an official accounting of project costs was made. Totals were: \$622,747 for houses, outbuildings, sanitation and water supply, land improvement, farmstead land cost; \$119,501 for community facilities including buildings, land improvement, utilities, and cost of land devoted to community use; \$48,119 for surplus land, management and operation, taxes and insurance.

The individual house costs averaged \$2,543 for the 39 four-room houses; \$2,835 for the 14 five-room houses; \$2,497 for the 30 houses that Resettlement and Farm Security rebuilt. This included all the costs that could be attributed to the houses, not only the labor and materials but the overhead costs of the construction division both off and on the project.

Description of the houses: no basement; foundations of concrete footings with brick piers; termite shields on top of piers and about all plumbing lines entering the house; chimney of brick construction with terra cotta flue lining; framing of wood construction with exception of concrete pre-cast porch steps; exterior walls are building paper with wood siding; metal roofs or shingles; interior walls are vertical tongue-and-groove lumber; double floors; ceilings are tongue-and-groove lumber with ventilation of attic space provided by built-in louver. Houses are wired for electricity and all necessary fixtures installed. Thirty-four of the houses have sink and hot water tank in kitchen; tub, lavatory and toilet in bathroom and septic tank for disposal of waste. Most of the rest have all this with the exception of the toilet.

The construction division had terraced 3,393 acres and drained 2,152. The county did all the necessary road work.

The report showed that 83 farmstead units had been built or repaired. These units averaged 76 acres or a total of 6,367, nearly 60 percent of the total area of the community. Community facilities took up 67 acres; roads and highways 197 acres; 643 acres were reserved for future development. Streams and waste land accounted for 3,507 acres. This made a total of 10,782 acres.

The report also stated: "Under the program of the Georgia Emergency Relief Administration, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Georgia Rural Rehabilitation Corporation, seven houses, 15 barns and miscellaneous dwelling repairs were started....The Resettlement Administration completed the buildings begun by these prior agencies, built 19 additional new houses, made permanent repairs on 22 existing houses, built necessary outbuildings and drilled wells for a total of 48 units....The Farm Security Administration constructed an additional 34 units and repaired a house on one existing unit bringing the total developed units to 83...

"A typical farm unit consists of house, barn, smoke house, and poultry house with deep well, electric pump and well house. Thirteen units have cotton houses, 34 have tobacco barns, 49 have privies and 34 have septic tanks. All units have barnyard, garden, poultry yard, and pasture fencing."





In the construction of the new houses, approximately 48 percent of the cost went for material, 41 percent for labor, 10 percent for general construction expense and less than one percent for equipment.

Construction was not entirely complete; the store, medical center, and the combination gym and auditorium were not yet finished, but they were being built under contract. (Farm Security's construction program all over the country was nearing an end and the construction division rapidly being liquidated; further construction was nearly all by contract.)

During August, the cooperative gin served not only the project families but a large number of neighboring farmers. After cotton harvest, several group planning meetings were held. At these meetings the families made out their farm and home management plans for the coming year. By assembling in groups of ten or fifteen and working them out together they saved time and the families gained a better understanding of the similarity of their problems, a stronger feeling of kinship.

In October, the Health Building was completed and new equipment installed. This brick building has a waiting room, a doctor's office, a treatment room where bones can be set and emergency operations performed, a laboratory, a room where some day a dentist may have his office. It also has offices for the community manager. The nurse is on duty every day and the doctor has clinics twice a week and can always be reached through the nurse in an emergency.

Two hundred and five pupils were enrolled in the school for the fall session. There were several meetings of the PTA.

At the end of 1938, there was another accounting of the progress of the families. There were now 28 families who have been in the community since the start. They owned an average of \$232 worth of livestock; \$119 of cattle; \$126 of hogs; \$22 of poultry; \$115 of farm equipment; \$147 of food and seed; \$263 of household furniture; \$231 of stored food. This gave them a total of \$1,258 in assets. Their liabilities average \$270. Their net worth \$988. This was an average increase of \$909.

The community manager in his year end report noted that the families had canned an average of 319 quarts per family. There was an average of 5.6 persons per family. Hookworm survey showed 45 percent prevalence. About 57 percent of the families kept complete records; 43 percent of the families kept partial records.

The original farm plan had been for each one-horse farmer to have five acres of cotton, four acres of peanuts, one acre of tobacco, one to two acres of truck crops, or 30 acres of cultivated land for money crops and approximately 18 acres in food and feed crops. A two-horse farmer would have roughly twice as much of everything.

This plan had been followed closely, except that AAA cut down tobacco to .75 of an acre. For 1939 the plan was changed slightly, by having every farmer raise ten hogs and one beef steer for market.



The cash crop sales were as follows:

Tobacco	-- 92 acres	\$21,007
Cotton	-- 650 acres	9,505
Peanuts	-- 550 acres	9,596
Melons	-- 185 acres	3,094
Livestock sales		1,500
Truck Crop sales		<u>150</u>
		\$44,854

Of the 28 families who have been on the farms since 1935, the average net worth of the two-horse farmers is \$1,326, while the average net worth of the one-horse farmers is \$695. This wide difference between the one-horse and the two-horse farms was due partly to the natural difference in productivity of the farms and partly to the ability of the farmers. During the years the most capable of the farmers had been shifted to two-horse units.

In March, 1939, W. T. Anderson, editor of the Macon Telegraph started a feature story on Irwinville with these words: "Believe it or not, I have found something in the New Deal which I can approve."

A vocational agricultural program which was started in January, 1939, had home projects for all its boys in the Spring of that year. This was the only grammar school in the state that had a program for boys clear down to the fifth grade.

The home projects are selected by the boy, the teacher, and the parents. Most of the boys had projects of from one to three acres of corn, runner peanuts, and velvet beans (a feed program that gets the most from the soil with a minimum of damage to its strength.) They were also buying pigs for breeding, and some of them were fattening steers.

Boys have access to a workshop which carries a full line of wood and metal working tools. This shop is also open to their fathers. At several meetings, the farmers studied control of internal parasites in hogs, control of blue mould in tobacco beds, establishment of a one variety cotton community.

Several swine sanitation projects were gotten underway. These projects were developed to show the benefits of raising hogs that are protected in their feeding and housing from parasites. It was hoped that the success of a few farmers with these projects would encourage others to follow their lead.

### PART III

This brings Irwinville up to March, 1939. The following is a general description of the community at that time:



## DESCRIPTION OF TOWN

Irwinville is off the main road and part of it looks really "back country." (There's a swamp in the area that is full of grey boney-looking tree trunks and black water and Spanish moss.) But it's rich-looking country as a whole.

The plantation house on the edge of town is two stories high with a double veranda, a wing on one side, and a dining room and kitchen that ramble off to the rear. The rooms are large and have ten-foot ceilings and fireplaces. The hallway and back porches are wide and break the house into sections, to aid ventilation. It furnishes a striking contrast to the newer farm homes. The plantation house was owned and lived in for many years by a wealthy man, yet it has single flooring, and no fireplace or any other means of heat on the second floor. (In the owner's day it had no inside toilet or running water.)

The cooperative store building is made of brick with plaster walls and a composition floor; one story, no basement. The building has one long room for the store and two smaller offices that serve as the cooperative office and the gas station office. It has two toilets.

Water tank and an electric pumping station serve the community buildings.

The old three-story brick jail is caving in, but a transient family lives in the bottom story. Woman said she hadn't lived there long and commented that when she first came to the town "everything was poor—since then there's been a boom." She looked ragged but her seven-year-old girl was neat and lovely.

The old court house is now empty. It served as headquarters for the construction division during development of the project, and was also the community center; the health clinics and dances were held there. Now it holds only the meetings of the Woodmen of the World (75 members).

There is a private gas station, an old frame Masonic Building, a Baptist Church, three school buildings, a private grocery store, a new office building and clinic, an old office (the deserted bank), cotton gin, water tank and pump house, warehouse, seed house, new store building.

Just outside the farms, about a mile from the community center is Crystal Lake. It is a beautiful place, with a lake that is at least a half-mile long, fed by springs, and bordered by a white sand beach and a wood covered with Spanish moss.

## CLUBS

Newest of the community's clubs is the Irwinville Home Improvement Club. It meets in five sections every week and all together once a month. It's a combination of the health, education, home supervisor, and home economist activities. This combining of activities and breaking up into sections it is thought, will bring the greatest degree of efficiency and cooperation. The meetings are well attended.





One of the largest children's groups is the Sunday School class which is non-denominational, and is taught by the project manager's wife. It meets every Sunday afternoon in the school auditorium.

The men have regular meetings of their branch of the Woodmen of the World.

### SCHOOL

There are three buildings for the school. One is the old remodeled brick two-story school house. It has classrooms for eight grades, a library with 800 books in it. The second is the completely equipped farm workshop. The third is the new gymnasium--its basketball court can be converted into an auditorium seating at least 500 people with a large stage at one end. It is built of brick with white pillars in front. It also contains one of the best equipped home economics classrooms in the country (four stoves--electric, wood, and two oil--an electric ice box, two sinks with running water, four kitchen tables, four big wood card tables, wood panelled walls, high ceilings, full length mirrors, a sewing machine, a day bed.) Here girls from the fifth to eighth grade are taught home economics for the first time in the history of the state. It was formerly a high school subject--and few farm girls completed high school.

### COOPERATIVE

The co-op runs the gin, the store, the seed cleaner, and a mule insurance association. It also buys a major part of the farmers' fertilizer and seed and sells their cotton and tobacco. Practically all residents belong to it.

## PART IV

### SUMMARY

The total amount spent in building Irwinville as given in the cost report of June 30, 1938, was \$866,882. Of this amount approximately \$244,000 was used for community buildings, the surplus land, and the non-capital items such as management and taxes. The remainder, \$622,747, was the amount spent for buying land, erecting the houses and getting the farms ready to be worked.

It is estimated that a large part of this latter cost, that of developing the farms, will be paid back to the Government in rentals or in purchase payments on the farms, over a period of forty years. The average rental at the present time is \$140 a year. The remainder of the farm cost as well as the community development expenses will probably have to be written off.

This write-off will for the most part be charged to the experimental side of the community. Irwinville is a new type of venture and with its fellow communities served as a proving ground for methods and means of farm community development. In the erection of these communities,





methods of house and barn construction were evolved that now make it possible to build four and five room frame houses for as low as \$1100 each; a personnel was trained in the hitherto untouched field of community management; efficient procedures were developed for handling the work all the way from the Washington office down through the regional office to the community site; in other words the groundwork was laid so that in many of the communities that followed Irwinville, expenses were at a minimum and the Government expects to be paid back the whole or nearly the whole amount spent for development.

Aside from the sums listed above, the only other amounts involved in the development of Irwinville were a \$63,000 loan to the cooperative and the spring loans to the individual farmers for operating expenses. These amounts are expected to be repaid in full.

It is still rather early to attempt to evaluate the whole worth of Irwinville. There are, however, several factors that may be taken as a partial measure of the progress made. The average net worth of the families who have been in their homesteads since 1935, for instance. They have averaged an increase in net worth of approximately \$1,000. The higher standard of living of the families is another; likewise, their improvement in health. The attitude of the children is a third; independent and straightforward in their actions and appearance, the children give direct evidence of being able to make their own way and take their place in the Government of both their community and their nation.

## PART V

### CASE HISTORIES

The following pages recite brief histories of several typical families as reported by a visitor to the project.

B. C. Traylor: In the early twenties Traylor farmed in Alabama. He sold his farm tools and went to Florida in the boom days of 1924-25-26; there he got a job as a policeman. In 1927-28-29 he half-cropped in Tift County, Georgia. In 1930-31, he worked for a farmer near Alapaha in Berrien County, Georgia. In 1932, he half-cropped in Tift County. In 1933-34, he received a few dollars from relief and the CWA. In the early part of 1935, Mr. and Mrs. Traylor and their five children moved to Irwinville from Tift County. They had a cow, twelve chickens, and some small tools. They also had some furniture. All was valued at \$100.

Mr. Traylor's financial statement on January 1, 1938, was as follows: Farm machinery \$97.50--workstock \$200--cattle \$350--hogs \$255--poultry \$54--feed and seed \$375--furniture \$100--food \$246.95--total assets \$1,678.45. His only liability was a \$50 doctor bill. His increase in net worth was \$1,528.45.

In March, 1939, one daughter was in College at Tifton, Georgia, one son was married and employed as a carpenter at Oscilla. At this time Traylor had 20 head of hogs, a team of mules, a large flock of chickens, some turkeys, about 14 head of cattle.



In 1937, his loan was \$235. In 1938 it was \$535 (mule died). In 1939, it was \$345 (fertilizer accounts for \$200 of this loan).

He has been a two-horse farmer all of the time at Irwinville. His house is well landscaped (yard full of bushes and a good hedge). His Irish potatoes and peas and onions are up in his garden. When his new barn was built he saved the old one by moving it back in the field. His boys are carrying on a hog sanitation project.

Chester Foster: The first family to move to the community and one of the most cooperative. In 1926-27 he rented. In 1928 the hail hit his 10 acres of tobacco and the insurance just cleared the expenses. In 1929, he raised tobacco, peanuts, cotton, and corn. In 1930, he moved to Calhoun County, Florida, had 30 acres of tobacco, put in \$1000 and lost \$1500. In 1932, moved to Cobb County, Georgia, raised potatoes on shares and barely made expenses (that year Mrs. Foster had an appendicitis operation). In 1933, was foreman of a road project under CWA. In 1934, was renting 20 acres and a house for \$6 a month. When I visited the Foster home, it was in immaculate condition. The housewife had covered a big box with chintz for a table, and made a chair out of a soap box. One of Foster's former landlords said that he had liked Foster as a farmer and would have kept him if he hadn't had a chance to sell the farm.

When they came to Irwinville in 1935, he was 24, his wife, Becky, 26, Herman 7, Marcell 4, Doug 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ --all in good health. They had furniture valued at \$100. That was all they owned.

In 1937, they changed from one-horse to two-horse farming. In January, 1938, they owned the following; Workstock \$150--farm machinery \$82.50--cattle \$60--hogs \$75--poultry \$20--feed and seed \$215--furniture \$200--food \$106.68--total assets were \$909.36. They had no liabilities. Their net worth increase since they came to Irwinville was \$809.36.

Harvey Evans: Evans was born in 1900 in Turner County. Obtained a 7th Grade education. Married in 1918. Sharecropped father's farm until 1925. In 1925-26, sharecropped with S. B. Bryan and Company. In 1927-28-29, rented. In 1930, rented another farm. In 1931 went to Florida and worked in cannery for \$24 per week. In 1932-33, sharecropped with father. In 1934, went on relief, got food but lacked clothes, owed doctor bill. In January, 1934, his wife died. At that time he had five children--Velna 15, Winford 13, Marguerite 11, Oveidue 9, Betty 3. That year the grandmother looked after the family. In March, 1935, Evans remarried.

In January, 1936, when he came to Irwinville, Evans had \$140 worth of worldly goods, \$100 of which was in household goods.

He received a loan of \$600 which he has repaid, as well as all of his subsequent loans.

Evans now has (March, 1939) assets of \$1,584, a good pair of mules, \$371 in household goods, \$288 food, \$87 hogs. His only debt is furniture, \$24. His net increase in worth is \$1,400. He has been a two-horse farmer all the time.



Jeff Singletary: From 1930 to January, 1933, he sharecropped in Thomas County--1933 to June, 1934, sharecropped in Colquitt County--at that time the crop looked so poor and the market so bad he cashed in his chips and gave up. The rest of 1934 and 1935 he had no regular employment--just income from garden, odd jobs and relief. He got free fuel by cutting wood. Acquired no debts. Singletary was 26 when he moved to the community in January, 1936. At that time he had \$100 of household goods and that was all. In January, 1939, he had assets of \$1,365 including \$300 workstock, \$140 cattle (eight head, of which three are milk cows), \$70 hogs, \$254 food. He owed \$460--had a net worth increase of \$803. He changed from a one-horse farm to a two-horse in 1937.

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